

Comprehensive/Strategic Plan Project Management Group

12/22/2022 Meeting Minutes Meeting held in Conference Room B/C

Members in Attendance: Yolanda Greaves, Michael Herbert, Kate Jurczyk, Brandi Kinsman, Peter Matchak, Anna Tesmenitsky

Members of the public attending: Chuck Lidz

As this was the inaugural meeting of the group, Brandi Kinsman began the meeting with a suggestion that each member report their specific reasons for wanting to be part of the group and expectations. Each group member responded and there was agreement from all that to be successful members need to operate with the understanding that members have good intentions, should express points of contention within the group and the importance of working to build trust.

The group next focused on operating understanding for the group and reviewed a draft document on group procedures. There was discussion that consensus for decision making is ideal but may not be possible in certain circumstances. The group agreed to general principles of consensus and Anna Tesmenitsky offered to write a draft of a mission to capture the group sentiment. The Project Management Group Mission Statement and Procedures attachment records the decisions made concerning meeting chairs, agenda, upcoming meetings and note taking. Noting that the Mission Statement portion document is the draft provided post meeting by Anna for review and has not been yet reviewed by the group.

At the meeting, Kate Jurczyk distributed printed copies of documents that she and Anna Tesmenitsky had provided as drafts for review. The group agreed to review these documents and provide comments if possible prior to the next meeting or come prepared to discuss at the next meeting. The draft documents provided but not reviewed this meeting (attached to meeting minutes):

- Steering Committee Member Role Description
- Steering Committee Selection Guidelines
- Sample Public Engagement for RFP

There was a brief discussion of planning to get Town committee representatives for the Steering Committee and Brandi Kinsman agreed to write a draft letter for the group to review of the letter.

The Items below were on the agenda and were not discussed at this meeting:

- RFP process
 - Public Engagement Models, such as “Heart and Soul”
- Steering Committee
 - Appointments
 - Non-Steering Committee roles
- Publicizing Comprehensive Plan (including town groups/committees, etc.)

Agreements: Chair for next meeting: Kate Jurczyk Next Meeting: January 19, 2023 Hybrid (in-person and remote)

Meeting adjourned at 7:16

Respectfully submitted, Kate Jurczyk

**Comprehensive Plan Project Management Group
Mission Statement & Procedures**

MISSION STATEMENT: We believe our diverse experiences and differences make us stronger, together. We each care deeply about Ashland and are committed to assuring a vibrant public process where everyone's voice is heard. With respect to our group, we will assure that each member's voice is heard and that we work in an open manner together, even when we disagree, so that we can build trust with one another and the public. We will aim for consensus. If the group is making a majority decision that at least one of us simply cannot accept, we will recognize such a moment as contrary to our mission and will immediately re-focus on working through our differences to the best of our ability.

Chairing Meeting: This role will rotate.

Meeting Minutes: This role will rotate.

Agenda: The Chair for the next meeting collects agenda items; Town Manager and/or Town Planner will post the agenda. Any agenda items are to be collected by the end of day the Friday before the meeting week. We will also do our best to exchange any materials for the meetings by end of day the Friday before the meeting week by sending them to the Chair and the Town Manager.

Meeting Calendar: Meetings will be the 3rd Thursday of each month, unless a 4th Thursday is required to avoid conflict with a Planning Board meeting. 8 of the 12 meetings in 2023 will be 6 - 8 PM (2 hours); 4 of the 12 meetings will be NOON-1 Pm (1 hour). We understand that we may need to create additional meetings each month to get our work done if the official time is not sufficient. **Meetings will be hybrid.**

Quorum: Per Mass. General Law, a quorum of the group will be majority, 4 of 6 members present. The Group has added a requirement that the quorum make up must include at least one Planning Board, one Select Board representative, and one Town staff-person (either Town Manager or Town Planner). However, if something urgent comes up where both Planning Board members, Selectboard Members or Town staff cannot attend - those two members can consent to the rest of the group meeting (as long as there is a quorum within those who are able to meet).

Decision making: Pursuant to our Mission, we want our decisions to be made via consensus. This should be possible whether a decision is one of strategy (i.e. how to achieve something) or choice between two distinct options (i.e. which candidate to choose for a position). We recognize, however, that it may be more difficult to reach consensus with the latter type of inquiry.

The Project Management Group will make decisions via consensus **to the best of our ability**. With respect to decisions of strategy, our expectation is that consensus will be reached. With respect to choices between distinct options where consensus may be more challenging, we will still aim for consensus and do all we can to reach it.

Our definition of consensus does not mean that everyone agrees at the same level. The focus of consensus is to achieve a mutually-acceptable level of agreement necessary to move forward.

If the group feels we are ready to make decisions where there has been significant differing of opinions, a “vote” will be taken where members can express level of agreement:

Thumbs up – “agreement”

Thumbs sideways – “I can live with it”

Thumbs down – “there is an unresolved issue, that must be addressed”

A group member with a Thumbs down “vote” should be able to explain the unresolved issue(s) and what it would take to move to consensus. The group will be responsible to come up with an acceptable resolution.

Steering Committee Member Role Description

The Steering Committee is crucial to the success of the Comprehensive Plan. We are seeking a broad demographic representation of the community and residents knowledgeable about the community, with expertise in a focus area and interest in the future of the Town.

Plan Development:

You will be asked to provide perspective and insight on information gathered as well as feedback on draft policies and implementation actions. Your insight will help shape guidelines for growth, addressing community needs, and long range priorities. As a Committee member you will act as a sounding board for the residents of Ashland.

Learning and Sharing Information:

Over the course of the planning process you may be introduced to new ideas about development, demographic trends, new technology, and other information. You may also find other ideas that you wish to share with the Committee and staff. We ask that you bring an open mind and an understanding that this process is collaborative and requires that we seek to hear all voices, and together as a group consider the best path forward for all residents.

Networking, Recruiting, and Support:

Steering Committee members can advocate for The Plan by telling residents about planning activities, upcoming events, or providing information about the purpose and potential impact of The Plan. Members may also be asked to brainstorm and identify specific community members to participate in focus groups or other activities based on expertise, affiliation, or lived experience.

During the public engagement phase, Members will be expected to volunteer at virtual or in person public events to assist with answering questions, facilitating conversations, or organizing activities with residents.

Time Commitment

The Steering Committee will be meeting X evenings. Once established, Members will discuss optimal future meeting frequency. The Committee will meet as often as is necessary to accomplish goals with the expectation it will likely be a minimum of 2 times a month in addition to support attendance at various community events. Please be aware that as we progress further into the planning process, subcommittees may form around certain focus areas. This could increase the time commitment for those who choose to be involved in subcommittees.

Meeting Attendance: Meeting attendance is vitally important to the success of the Committee and the planning process. We ask that you make attendance a top priority since each member brings a unique perspective that will be crucial to our mission.

Ashland Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Selection Criteria Guidelines

The Comprehensive Plan Project Management Group has responsibility for assembling the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and has the goal to assemble a group of stakeholders with the widest possible representation given the practical size limits for Steering Committee working effectiveness.

Selection criteria guidelines for Steering Committee membership will be based on:

1. A representative from a Board/Commission/Committee will be accepted as a Steering Committee member as supported by a vote of the respective Board/Commission/Committee with the understanding that member has reviewed and will support the “*Steering Committee Role Description*”.
2. Members of the public (those who would not be on the Steering Committee as a representative of a Board/Commission/Committee) the below guidelines will be applied to selection.

- **General**

The goal is to have the Steering Committee have equitable representation across all Ashland precincts. Of course, much depends on public interest and who applies. However, the goal should be to create balance across precincts. To achieve this, the Project Management Group will select members of the public in the following order:

1. We will gather all the applications and assess if all the precincts are represented;
2. If specific precincts have low applications, we will actively seek applicants from any precincts that lacked applications or had significantly less than other precincts;
3. We will then select members to fill the Steering Committee Spots reserved for members of the public by precinct.

- **Multiple Applicants from the same Precinct Criteria**

The Project Management Group will be aware of the capabilities and backgrounds of members in order to use guideline criteria for choosing applicants. With the goal of the most diverse representation possible, selection criteria may include:

- **Demographics** (including consideration for criteria as age, race, gender, ethnicity). As an example, if possible we would not want all members identifying as same gender to also be in the exact same age range. Our goal should be diversity.
- **Knowledge/Skills** Preference may be given to an applicant who has a specialized area of expertise on important plan categories:
 - Economic Development
 - Land use
 - Energy & Sustainability
 - Education
 - Transportation
 - Housing
 - Natural & Cultural Resources
 - Development patterns
- **Experience** successful participation in a civic or private group committee can be used as a factor in selection.

Public Engagement in RFP SAMPLE FROM SOUTH PORTLAND

The Comp Plan update process will require a multi-faceted, innovative engagement program that goes beyond conventional engagement plans. The City is **highly diverse**; while we maintain high levels of civic engagement, large portions of the community are not routinely interacting and providing feedback on policy efforts. The engagement plan must provide multiple and varied forms of engagement leveraging established and new outreach methods

DEI is a priority for the community in all that we do, and must be evident in the Comp Plan update process. A land use planning consultant experienced in DEI is required. The City is seeking recommendations for how best to integrate DEI into the planning process, however the following two tasks—or similar tasks the consultants may recommend—are suggested to ensure a thorough vetting of policies that may be developed through the planning process:

- **Alternative Review.** Include a task to review planning alternatives with a stakeholder group or consultant with expertise in DEI so that the City can explore inequities that may be embedded in proposed policies.
- **Plan Language.** Include a task is for a DEI consultant to review the final wording and expression of policies in the draft Comp Plan to ensure clear, inclusive language has been incorporated throughout.

Proposers will be required to submit a statement on their firms' commitment to DEI and how that commitment is reflected and executed in their team and on their projects.

Public participation in the development of the updated Comp Plan is essential to this planning effort and must include a multi-faceted outreach process designed to engage every aspect of the South Portland community in visioning the City's future. Diversified engagement methods tailored to reaching a variety of community members will be needed. The updated Comp Plan is capturing the community's vision and goals, and we need to hear from all members of the community. Therefore, the Consultant should propose as inclusive a process as possible that utilizes technology and creative strategies to ensure that everyone feels comfortable participating.

The consultant **shall submit a draft Public Engagement and Outreach Plan** as part of their proposal. This plan may be refined after contract award with staff and CPC input. The City has prepared a menu of engagement methods, below, that should be considered. The Engagement and Outreach Plan shall demonstrate innovative, inclusive, and diversified options for engagement, and must be associated with a genuine ability to inform, influence, or shape the contents of the plan.

Engagement Methods for Consideration

- Outreach
- Leveraging stakeholders and representative groups to connect with hard to reach populations (i.e. an ongoing Ambassador program that helps connect with residents that do not or cannot connect through traditional engagement channels)

- Volunteer recruitment and management for direct, face-to-face engagement
- Multiple neighborhood-level meetings as well as community-wide meetings
- Online engagement (social media)
- Surveys & polling
- Focus groups
- Interaction with City committees
- Community forums involving the City Council, as well as State legislative delegates, City committee representatives, residents, business owners, the development community, and housing providers, among others.
- Establishing kiosks and other physical interventions in the community that provide people a means to share input.
- Community/neighborhood walks and tours
- Materials and Advertising
- Well-developed engagement materials for key discussions (visual surveys, and interactive density-exploration exercises), and software tools
- Consistent branding for the effort and maintaining intentional, reliable, and recognizable communication on the planning effort
- Translation services in at least three (3) languages; this does not include translating the draft plan
- Advertising and connecting through radio and television media, social media

The Public Engagement and Outreach Plan must identify staff and consultant responsibilities to execute the Plan. A robust and creative engagement proposal will be given significant priority in the evaluation of responses and consultants should explain their plan in detail in their responses.